

Choice Literature.

MISS GILBERT'S CAREER.

CHAPTER XXVII.—WHICH CHANGES THE RELATIONS OF SOME OF OUR CHARACTERS, RELATES THE CHANGES OF OTHERS, AND CLOSES THE BOOK.

Mr. Thomas Lampson, the popular and gentlemanly conductor, etc., etc., was probably quite as much delighted with the arrangement as any of his neighbours; and having had a hand (in his opinion) in bringing his friends together, he next procured a pair of passes to New York from the president of the railroad corporation, and sent them to Arthur, as a slight inducement for him to reply favourably to his New York call.

Life with our Crampton friends did not linger. why should its story be prolonged?

Arthur felt and acted as if the power of another soul had been added to his own. He was in no mood for love's dalliance and dissipation. The sense of loneliness which once oppressed him, as he tried to front the life to which he had been called, was gone, and, with the companionship which had been pledged to him, he felt prepared for any labour, for any sacrifice. The past was a long dream of toil and trial into which his memory flowed with ineffable tenderness; the future a bright reality of love, beneficence and fruition. He longed to immerse himself in the life that was already dashing at his feet, as a strong swimmer, standing upon the ocean's beach, long to plunge into the waves and drown the restless fever of his powers. The long subordination of his being past, every faculty of his soul sprang into positive life and demonstration.

Toward her new life Fanny proceeded tremblingly. Her self-confidence relinquished, she turned to him to whom she had pledged herself for guidance and encouragement. It was a strange thing to her, that in her feeling of dependence there was no sense of humiliation, no loss of self-respect—that in this feeling she found a degree of joy and rest and strength to which she had hitherto been a stranger. She had lost her habitual self-seeking. Just her imperious will—gladly laid down her proud self-reliance, and found her womanhood. In after months and years she learned, through feeling the springs of a man's power, enriching the food of his life, purifying his motives, encouraging his efforts, and filling his heart with love, what were her true relations to manhood. She learned that man and woman are one, that neither man nor woman can lead a manly life alone, that the noblest manhood must draw its vital elements from womanhood, and that all the strong and masculine demonstration of her own life had been bald and barren. She learned that man holds in his constitution the element of power, the basis of all demonstrative public function and that, by the degree in which woman possesses this element, is she exceptional, even if she be not abnormal.

She learned, too, that this characteristically masculine element of power, unsoftened, unregulated, unpurified, unfructified by the characteristic element of womanhood or the discipline of womanhood, is a blind, selfish, unfruitful force, dissociated altogether from goodness, and lacking the essential qualities of humanity. She learned that the power of Arthur Blague was a good power through the womanly subordination of his early life, and that the noblest function of her life was to sit in the place of that early discipline, and inform and inspire the demonstration of his manhood by her own ministry of womanly love and tenderness. When her life had become fully blended into unity with his, she learned that a woman's truest career is lived in love's serene retirement—lived in feeding the native forces of her other self—lived in the career of her husband.

But we are getting along faster than our lovers. Arthur's engagement to Fanny and the changes which it involved were not without very important relations to their respective families. The question as to what should become of Arthur's mother, though troubling her not a little, did not amount to a question with Arthur. The man was not a less dutiful son than the boy. He determined that his mother should accompany him; and, as it was hard for her to think of parting with the house in which she had lived for so many years, Dr. Gilbert provided for its retention in her possession. It would be a good summer house, he said, for them all to occupy during the annual vacations.

So, unobtrusively, and with a crushing sense of her uselessness in the world, Mrs. Blague accustomed herself to the thought of removing to New York. Her life was hid in Arthur. All her pride, all her love and all her earthly hope were in him.

Dr. Gilbert, though cordially approving Fanny's match, was quite overcome with the thought of losing her. The failure of his son to fulfil his early promise, and the change that had been wrought in his daughter, had effected a revolution in his feelings. In truth, now that Arthur had been brought into such peculiar relations to him, he began to dwell upon his prospects in the same way that he formerly did upon those of Fred. It was but a few days before he was ready to talk of his prospective son-in-law with all the ardor of an old and over-fond father.

Poor Fred! All this affected him deeply. Rest had done much for him, and he felt his strength slowly mending, but the removal of his sister was to him like the loss of a right eye. When he saw that he was to be left alone, stranded upon a barren home when he saw how his father's interest in him was abated and had been transferred to others, he was very sad.

But this did not last. He saw how soon the care of his father's affairs must come into his hands, or pass into those of strangers, and the consideration awoke him to new life. Renouncing forever his studies and all ambition for distinction, he set himself about business, taking Fanny's place in doing his father's correspondence, and mingling in outdoor life, as he became strong enough for it.

The gossips of Crampton, though busy with their inquiries, could find out, nothing relating to the approaching wedding. Fanny herself was puzzled about it quite as much as they,

and was helped to a decision, at last, by a suggestion from her New York friend, Mary Sargent.

About this time, Mr. Lampson, the conductor, called to see Arthur Blague upon business. The superintendent of the road had been invited to a more desirable post in another corporation, and the conductor wanted the vacant place, and considered himself competent to fill it. He was sure Arthur could get the appointment for him, and Arthur promised to do his best for that end. Through Arthur's influence, or by means of his own excellent reputation, "the popular and gentlemanly conductor" was, a few days afterward, transformed into "the obliging and efficient superintendent."

When Thomas Lampson, Esq., called upon Arthur to inform him of his good fortune, it occurred to the latter that, as his friend's salary had been materially increased, it was possible that his wants had been enlarged in a corresponding degree. So he proposed that when he should remove to New York, the new superintendent should take his wife over to the vacated house, and set up housekeeping—using the family furniture, and taking care of it, with a view to ultimately purchasing the whole establishment. The proposition pleased Mr. Lampson exceedingly. To become the master of Arthur Blague's mansion was a new and very grateful dignity, and the matter was finally arranged to the satisfaction of all parties.

On a bright May morning, following this arrangement, there was a huge collection of trunks and boxes upon the piazza of Dr. Gilbert's house, and another pile equally large in front of Mrs. Blague's dwelling. There was also, at the station house that morning, an unusually large number of young men and women, unprepared for a journey. They had come to witness a departure, and they did not wait long. The trunks and boxes had been brought over upon a truck, and they were soon followed by the members of both families entire—Arthur and his mother, Fanny and Fred, and the doctor and Aunt Catharine. They were all going down to witness Arthur's ordination, at the invitation of Mr. Frank Sargent and his family. The group of townspeople closed around Arthur to bid him farewell, and to offer him a thousand good wishes. Fanny was adjured not to think of getting married before she returned, which for some reason, brought a bright blush to her face.

The new superintendent of the road took the occasion to run over his line that morning, and relieve the party of the care of the luggage they had taken, besides making himself generally agreeable all the way. No conductor was allowed to invade the sacredness of that group by the call for tickets. As they approached the trunk-road that would separate them from Mr. Lampson's care, the superintendent invited Arthur to a private interview. They therefore took a seat together.

"You know," said Tom Lampson, "that I sent you a couple of New York passes a while ago."

"Yes, and I was very thankful for them."

"You know too, that I went to you to get a good word for me with the directors, when I wanted to be superintendent."

"Yes, and I was very much obliged to you for that."

"The two things weren't a great ways apart, were they?"

"No—why?"

"Did you think, because I sent you those little, contemptible passes, that I wanted to hire you to work for me?"

"Never! of course not."

"All right, then," said Mr. Lampson. "I was thinking about you last night, and this thing came across me, and I just kicked the clothes off, and jumped out of bed, and frightened my wife all but to death. The fact is I didn't know anything about the superintendent matter when I sent those passes—not a thing."

"My dear fellow, I didn't suppose you did," said Arthur, with a hearty smile. "So you have had all your trouble for nothing."

"Well, I was bound not to let you go away thinking that Tom Lampson was a mean man—giving things to his friends for the sake of getting work out of them. All square, is it?"

"Oh! you know it is, Tom," responded Arthur.

"Ever think of old times, Mr. Blague?" inquired Mr. Lampson. "Remember about mowing bushes, up in Ruggles' pasture? Things have changed some, haven't they?"

"I have thought of these things a great deal lately. The Lord has been very kind to me, and to you too, Tom. Just think how prosperously you are getting along."

"I know it," responded Mr. Lampson, "and it's a rotten shame that I ain't pious; but I don't get at it, somehow. I mean to be, though, and I think I shall be. I vow I'd give a pile if I was only all through with that thing."

"Where there's a will there's a way, in religion, as in other things," replied Arthur.

"To tell you the truth about it," said Mr. Lampson, "I've always been hoping I should get converted under you. It don't seem as if Daddy Wilton could do anything for me. He don't stir me up a particle. I thought you'd fetched me once, but somehow it didn't stick."

Arthur could not help smiling at the strange conception of Christianity which had possession of the mind of his friend, but felt that he had no time then to enlighten him.

"If I don't get along," said Mr. Lampson, "you'll see me in New York. I ain't going to drop this thing, anyway. I believe if I'd been back, when you did, I might be a preacher now, myself. I tell you, religion does lots for a feller. It kind o' nourishes him all over, and all through. I told my wife the other day—says I, it's just like manure in a bed of roses. It ain't very pleasant, perhaps, when you first get hold of it, but it makes a feller grow—it does—it's true."

Arthur had only time to respond to Mr. Lampson's opinions touching the fertilizing influences of religion, and to give him a cordial exhortation to carry his good resolutions into effect, when the train was stopped, and the passengers were directed to change cars. Arthur bade the superintendent an affectionate farewell. The latter saw the baggage of the company safely shifted, and then went about, looking under the cars, and up to the sky—anywhere but in

the faces of his departing friends. As the train was about starting, he ran into the car, shook hands with them all, laughed all the time, jumped off, and waved his handkerchief, and then went away wiping his nose with it, and pretending to have a very ugly cinder in his eye.

That night the party slept in the spacious Kilgore mansion, of which Mary Sargent was the mistress. Poor Mrs. Blague moved like one in a dream. She had hardly expected to live to reach New York; and to be entertained in such magnificent style by her old boarder—the mistress of the Crampton Centre School—under such peculiar circumstances, seemed so unreal—so miraculous—that it oppressed her quite superstitiously. A day or two, however, sufficed to give her command of her scattered senses, and she soon began to enjoy the change of scenery and circumstance to which her journey had introduced her.

Very interesting rumours were in circulation in the church to whose pastorate to which Arthur had been called—rumours which found their way out into the circles in which the popular authoress of "Rhododendron" had moved in former years. The audience that assembled to witness the ordination exercises was remarkably large. Many were at a loss to imagine why such a crowd should be collected, even in the great city, on such an occasion. The seats were not only all filled, but the aisles were crowded with patiently standing men and women.

There were, at least, three deeply interested witnesses of the simple and impressive ceremonies by which Arthur Blague was set apart to the office of the Christian ministry, and inaugurated as pastor of the new church—Mrs. Blague, Mary Sargent and Fanny Gilbert. As he stood before them, calm and firm and self-possessed, his eye bright with the full strength of manhood, a thousand sympathetic hearts beating around him, and a great career lying before him, tears filled their eyes, and all their sensibilities were flooded with excitement, as it they were moved by the inspiration of eloquence or poetry.

At the close of the exercises of the occasion, while the audience waited for the accustomed benediction, Arthur descended from the pulpit, and made his way, unattended, down the broad aisle to the pew where Fanny Gilbert sat with her friends. He opened the door, bowed with a pleasant smile to Fanny, who rose, took his arm, and advanced with him to the chancel, where a white-haired old pastor awaited them. There the career of Miss Gilbert ended, and the career of Mrs. Arthur Blague began. There, in the presence of Arthur's people, did she give herself to him and to them. The old pastor gave them and the congregation his benison, and a multitude of friends pressed forward to make the acquaintance of their new pastor and his wife. Among those who came around the interesting pair were several of Fanny's old friends, who welcomed her back with abundant joy. Mr. Frank Sargent took the occasion to be very busy. There were several persons present whom he wanted in the church, and whom he had thus far failed to "rope in." These were brought forward and introduced to the Rev. Mr. Blague and his wife, and treated with all that consideration which their uncertain position demanded.

Thus, for the purification of the great city, was another rill of the healthful country life poured into it. Thus, in God's loving and far-seeing providence, was brought to its terminal link that long concatenation of trial and sorrow, of struggle and disappointment, of patient waiting and faithful working, of sickness and death, which has formed the staple of this story. Into these two lives, prepared for great purposes, had been poured abundant experiences. For them had others unconsciously lived. Even the proprietor of Hucklebury Run, and the man who had robbed him both of his money and his daughter, were made tributary to the grand result. With frames which only country breeding can build, with broad and fruitful natures, with power to labour, and with determined will and purpose, they gave themselves to the city—a contribution to those conservative and recuperative forces of civil life, evermore country-born, which makes progress possible, and which alone save that life from fatal degeneration and final extinction.

Thenceforward they became dispensers rather than receivers. Hitherto, events had ended in them—little rivulets of experience, running in from wide distances, had found in them their termination; plans of life had exhausted their material on reaching them; plots had unravelled themselves at their feet. Now, prepared for their destiny and their ministry, the stream of beneficence went out from them, and grew broader as it flowed. Crampton life, which had seemed so poor, insignificant, hard and barren, blossomed in New York into consummate beauty, and shook with its burden of fruit like Lebanon. We shall hear of that fruit in the "harvest-home" of the angel-reapers.

There was a midsummer gathering but a few years ago at the old Gilbert mansion. Dr. Gilbert and Mrs. Blague were not there, for they had passed away. Dr. Gilbert had lain down to rest by the side of his wife, and Mrs. Blague had taken her place with her husband, little Jamie, and the fair-haired children of her youth. The house has a new master and a new mistress. Fred Gilbert is a farmer, and Mrs. Fred Gilbert is a sister of Mrs. Thomas Lampson—in short, a Joslyn—not only a pretty woman, but every way a worthy one. So Arthur Blague and his wife, Thomas Lampson and his wife, and Mr. and Mrs. Fred Gilbert, are bound to each other by family ties no less than by the closest friendship.

The party talk of old times and old scenes. They walk over to the burial ground, and, in silence, gather about the clumps of roses that hide their friends, and speak tenderly of the departed. Arthur leans upon the family monument, and, gazing upon the mound that rises above the breast of little Jamie, goes back in memory over his painful history, and weeps like a woman. At length he calls to him his three children, and tells them where their uncle lies, of whom they have heard so many times.

As they pass out they note a newly made grave by the side of that of Mr. Ruggles. "So the old woman is gone," is all the remark that is made. They call upon the Joslyn family—now one of the most thrifty and respectable families